

# Listen

## A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

J U L Y 2 0 1 6

V O L 1 0 : I S S U E 3

### TIME: A WORTHY INVESTMENT

An unexpected mathematical calculation resulted in a reflection about the number 2,080, which initiated a chain of contrasts and connections—an inquiry which caused an inner awakening, new realizations, and footprints into my future.

I'd been editing that night, wordsmithing, when a text arrived from a soon-to-be college graduate who was seeking meaningful work and connection, with very few prospects. We'd been conversing for months, as she sought her path, weighing geographical options and work opportunities. The outlook in her chosen field wasn't promising, but she'd found an opportunity at a non-profit, and was weighing pros and cons, calculating living expenses. Her texted question to me: "How much would a job that pays USD \$16 an hour amount to in a year?" I calculated it for her by creating a formula:  $\$ \text{hour} \times 8 \text{ hours} = ? \times 5 \text{ days} = ? \times 52 \text{ weeks} = \text{annual salary}$ . Her response back was one word: "What?" Then her Dad sent a text message with a calculation that had the same end figure as mine, but in a way that made no sense to me. He'd multiplied 2,080 by the hourly rate. It took me 45 minutes to realize that 2,080 is the equivalent of hours worked in a year, at an 8 hour a day place of employment, 5 days a week, which is a somewhat stereotypical work commitment in North America.



Red-billed streamertail—*Trochilus polytmus*

I'd never heard the significance of the number 2,080, but it caught my attention, and shocked me. Suddenly this wasn't a college graduate question, it was also for a woman who had lived half a decade, and was now wondering about her own 2,080 plus hours. I woke up the next morning thinking about 2,080 hours of time.

I'd been at a crossroads for many months, already asking three questions, and exploring the inquiry with my spiritual guide. The questions: *What is the work I want to do? Where do I want to live? And, who do I want to do life with?* I began to write in my journal, asking myself, *How do I want to spend my 2,080 plus work hours each year?* Then I paused: why did I query how I would spend time? What if I were to shift and instead reflect about how to invest my time? How might I invest my time into relationships with the people I love, and my work life? And equally important, into service, health, play, advocacy, healing, and wholeness? What would constitute my 2,080 plus, and how might I choose

to show up in a way that amplifies time, in contrast to a spending or expenditure of minutes, hours, days, weeks, years?

I know that a spiritual director or guide can be an extremely valuable resource in an inquiry such as this, because when we get short-sighted, he or she will be alongside us, gently inviting questions, threading spirit into time and circumstance. We will be reminded that we are the beloved, deserve to be loved and be love for others. Participating in spiritual conversation can ensure the investment of ourselves into our one wild and unpredictable life is honest and valuable. Please join me in asking, and in reflecting with your spiritual director or guide, small group, with a trusted friend or partner, or in your own journal: "What constitutes my 2,080 plus? Where will I choose to invest my time with the days I'm given to live?"

—Pegge Erkeneff

#### SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- Field Notes: *How do you describe spiritual direction or spiritual guidance to seekers?*
- Review: *The Psalms*, with Bono and Eugene Peterson
- Global Resources
- Poem: *Ambrosia*
- Ask Owl

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*Listen* is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org), you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).



# VIDEO REVIEW

**The Psalms, with Bono & Eugene Peterson**  
by Fuller Studio

Fourth Lines Films, 2016  
21:42 minutes, free

<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/bono-eugene-peterson-psalms/>



A friendship between Bono (lead musician of the band U2) and Eugene Peterson (author of contemporary-language Bible translation *The Message*) started in 2002. This evocative video, *The Psalms*, records a conversation between a scholar who brings scripture into everyday understanding, and a musician who touches the world. Their lives intersect, and a provocative conversation and friendship evolves.

Bono queries, “Why do we need art? Why do we need the lyric poetry of sounds? Because the only way we can approach God is, if we are honest, through metaphor, through symbol. So art becomes essential, not decorative.”

A valuable exchange about honesty and dishonesty takes place (13:53), and Peterson says, “Praying wasn’t being nice before God. ... I think we’re trying for honesty, which is very, very hard in our culture.” Bono goes on to reply, “God wants from you the truth. The way, the truth, and that truthfulness—know the truth. That truth will set you free—it will blow things apart. ... I look to see more of that, in life, in art, in music.”

Peterson says, about U2’s song “40,” based on Psalm 40: “It’s one of the songs that reaches into the hurt and disappointment and difficulty of being a human being. It acknowledges that in language that is immediately recognizable. There’s something that reaches into the heart of a person and the stuff we all feel but many of us don’t talk about.”

Bono says, “I waited and waited and waited for God. At last he looked. Finally he listened. He lifted me out of the ditch. He pulled me from deep mud, stood me up on a solid rock to make sure that I wouldn’t slip. He taught me how to sing the latest God-song...”

A reverent exchange, the viewer is gifted with a glimpse into reverent friendship between two men who are seekers, have depth and connection, and worldwide influence through their expression of work and service in the world. A dance of love between friends, the listener deepens awareness of God, mystery, and spiritual friendship made tangible through an investment of time, art, poetry, and song.

## GLOBAL RESOURCES : Supporting Your Spiritual Journey

**16 August 2016**

**“Spiritual Direction 101”**

Free half-hour SDI teleconference  
12:00 p.m. EDT; 4:00 p.m. GMT/UTC  
Details and RSVP at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

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**20–23 April 2017**

**Seeking Connection**

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Spiritual Directors International series of educational events including a conference Thursday through Sunday. Registration opens in September 2016. More information at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

**Join more than 6,000 people in an inclusive, global, contemplative, multi-faith learning community called Spiritual Directors International.** For more than twenty-five years, SDI has been committed to compassionate listening around the world and across traditions. SDI inspires and connects seekers with spiritual guidance. Everyone who cares about spiritual companionship is invited to become

a member of Spiritual Directors International, a nonprofit charity serving the educational needs of seekers and people who offer spiritual companionship. [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

● Connect on Facebook: *Spiritual Directors International for spiritual care*, <http://on.fb.me/SDIFacebook>

● Order a FREE subscription to *Listen: A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction*. Go to: [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

● Access online education from home through SDI Webinars. Participate in a live webinar or download a recording today. CEUs are available. <http://bit.ly/SDIWebinarsOnDemand>



## HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OR SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE TO A SEEKER?

### *Spiritual Directors International members respond:*

“Spiritual direction is more about companioning someone on their spiritual journey than it is about ‘direction.’ The person who is providing the companioning service is all about listening and asking open-ended questions that help the seeker get to feelings and heart issues. The seeker thus, more often than not, finds their own answers and grows ever-deeper into self. The aspect of being listened to so intentionally is a gift and an art that expands and affirms us.” —Alice Holstein, Wisconsin, USA

“Spiritual direction is a relationship for persons who are searching for the places, where as Frederick Buchner puts it, ‘their heart’s deepest desires and the world’s deepest needs connect.’ Something is nudging them to pay more attention to who they are, where they belong, and what they do everyday. They choose a companion to explore with them the meaning of their experiences of God and seek to discover where God’s Spirit may be guiding them

for their well being and the well being of others in the midst of their daily pleasures, challenges, and transitions.” —Carol J. Allen, Illinois, USA

“I explain that spiritual direction is a way to look for God in your life. It is the job of the spiritual director to listen to your story with one ear open to the Spirit of God. The director is the person who walks alongside of you on your journey through life. We walk as companions. I walk alongside not before or behind.” —Celine Burke, Oregon, USA

“Spiritual direction is help and guidance for people wanting to grow in their spiritual journey and experience with God. The purpose of spiritual direction is to grow in intimacy with God, become a more spiritually formed person, and develop in living a purposeful life. It is a way to nurture the health of your soul, make sense of your

[www.oasismin.org/LeadDeeply.htm](http://www.oasismin.org/LeadDeeply.htm)




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## FIELD NOTES, CONTINUED

faith journey, and become more aware of God's presence and work in your life." —Larissa Marks, Hawaii, USA

"Opening thought to God, listening to truth with love, dwelling in the present moment, being Christlike understanding your spiritual identity, giving thanks to God, letting go of mortal misconceptions, being still." —Trevor Leach, Isle of Man, UK

"If someone comes looking into spiritual direction then that seeking place is the point of desire or yearning. Instead of being concerned about the 'what or who' they are seeking, look at the *why*. The why is at the center of their feelings and their passion. The process of description will take care of itself in the mystery of the seeking." —Chuck Link, North Carolina, USA

"At times in people's spiritual journeys, we find ourselves questioning the paths we are taking. Sometimes there is doubt. Sometimes an ambiguity. And sometimes a need to enhance and raise the level of our experiences in our journeys. There are many resources we can call on which would constitute a 'self help' mode. But, what if we were to ask a trained, objective person to walk with us? What if


there were a place we could go to pray and be vulnerable in a non-judgemental environment. A place where we could intentionally open ourselves to our weaknesses and doubts and place them in the hands of Jesus. A place of heightened awareness to the real presence of the Holy Spirit? There are such persons. There are such places: spiritual directors and spiritual direction." —Jim Boss, Illinois, USA

"Spiritual direction invites us to explore our relationship with God and ourselves with the help of an outside observer who is inspired and guided by the Spirit." —Brigid Waszczak, Arizona, USA

"As we move through life we may well become attached to accomplishing. Each of us places value on different ways of accomplishing. However, on the spiritual journey one can become much more attached to awakening to the Divine Presence within, and one learns to let go of the need to accomplish in order to feel loved by God. On the spiritual road divine union becomes a reality. So spiritual direction is about opening to the choice of awakening over accomplishing." —Tanda Jo Ainsworth, California, USA

"Our spiritual journey is not meant to be traveled alone. A spiritual director or guide is someone who travels with us on our journey as a listener, questioner, and supporter. She or he allows the Holy Spirit to work through her or him as a companion to the one seeking direction." —Sue Hinderlinder, Georgia, USA


"A spiritual director is simply a 'companion' sought after by the person who desires to see God in all things, no matter the season in their life. Truly, directors do not direct, but rather serve as a witness on the seeker's journey through sacred listening, offering authentic presence to each session as a vessel of the Holy Spirit." —Terri Preskar, Ohio, USA



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## Ambrosia

Unfathomable light

knelt down

whispering songs,

tenderly homing

through channels of

being.

And I, at last,

began to hum

the same melody.

We drank the ambrosia

offering together,

sipping from

a golden chalice

waiting lengthy years

in my heart.

“Playing small no

longer suits us.

Rise up, now,

with me

and forever shine

—Diane-Ellen McCarron, New York, USA



# ASK OWL

**Q**uestion: *Can you please describe spiritual direction? It seems to me that someone who has questions about prayer, God, contemplative practice, etc. might want to meet with a spiritual guide. And, does a spiritual director advise me? I hear more and more about spiritual guidance, and would appreciate a brief, concise explanation. Can both men and women, of any age go to spiritual direction?*



**R**esponse: Excellent questions! If you talked to several spiritual directors you would hear similarities and differences in their responses. First of all, everyone can meet with a spiritual director—men and women, of all ages. Spiritual guidance is not gender or age specific. The core question to ask yourself and reflect upon is: “What is transpiring and reverberating in my life that might be well served by meeting regularly with a compassionate listener, someone who is trained in discernment?”

People choose to meet with a spiritual guide when they explore and cultivate their life of prayer, meditation and contemplation, during a time when they wrestle with institutions and authorities, or inner promptings

that invite change, and when healing and wholeness is desired in one’s life. A spiritual director tunes into the animating Spirit that is central to life. A spiritual director rarely offers advice, and instead listens intently, and may ask questions that enable someone to learn what he or she didn’t know they already knew. Often, a spiritual


guide has a tool bag of spiritual practices and creative ideas that may spark something for a new or deepened spiritual practice, and enable an ability to recognize and express significance in daily life.

A spiritual director might be the safe harbor for someone’s deepest angst that desires to be shared and received. God, the Sacred, Holy One, or Ultimate Reality might be named, or unnamed. Seekers with no experience in religion meet with spiritual directors. Individuals who dwell in a specific faith community meet with spiritual guides. Leaders seek spiritual direction. Groups listen together during spiritual direction. Spiritual direction has been described as compassionate listening.

If you would like to learn how to locate a spiritual director, and good interview questions to ask potential spiritual directors, please visit [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org), or sign-up for a free teleconference, “Spiritual Direction 101”

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail [Listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:Listen@sdiworld.org).


**TIP:** Watch one or more of the short videos in the “SDI Learns from...” video series on YouTube and the SDI website. You can watch from a laptop, tablet, computer, or smart phone. There are more than a hundred videos on the SDIworld YouTube channel. Spiritual teachers and guides from the SDI global learning community offer their wisdom, including how to seek and find a spiritual director. The topics will help provide guidance to questions and inquiry. In fact, watching the videos might give you a sample of what it would be like to meet with a spiritual director!


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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...

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—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio

